The Ongoing Task of Staying Current in Clinical Practice

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With a multitude of available options for practitioners, staying current can be daunting. Here’s what I do.

The task of staying current in clinical practice can be daunting for physicians in a busy private practice. There are a multitude of available options for practitioners.

The way I choose to stay current in my practice derives from several methods. Since I am a solo practitioner, it is difficult for me to get away from the office for an extended time. There are several journals that I like to read on a regular basis and those are American Family Physician, Journal of Family Practice, Family Practice Management, Journal Watch, and a plethora of the so-called "throw-away" journals.

The nice thing about reading journals is that CME is abundant from these sources and a few hours of weekly reading can allow the physician to accumulate at least seven to 10 credits from answering questions in these journals. There is no set time frame for reading journals and this can be very convenient for those of us with hectic schedules.

There are several online sources as well and these sources can provide numerous CMEs as well. “Up To Date” is an excellent online resource and routine searches for answers at the point of care allow the physician to accumulate at least 0.5 CMEs per search. Epocrates is a very handy pharmacology resource you can access via web or a smart phone. Epocrates also allows the physician to read an article and answer questions while on the go. The Prescriber's Letter is also a very nice resource and is completely free from industry bias. TPL can be accessed either in print form (mailed to your office), online, or via a smart phone as well. TPL provides CME credits for successfully answering the questions contained in each monthly publication.

Several other online sources allow the physician to watch webinars, attend virtual meetings, and also receive pharmacology updates and these sources provide remuneration in the form of CME credits and some provide an online gift certificate for shopping (such as Amazon.com) or the ability to select a medically relevant item (such as a textbook). Again, no specified time frame exists for completing online CME and this allows the physician to do as much as or as little as he/she wishes per session.

Many live CME courses can be quickly viewed through many websites and this can be extremely valuable for planning your next weekend trip or short family vacation. The AAFP hosts several live courses at rotating venues each year. The National Procedures Institute also provides very quality CME courses and these courses allow the physician to learn a new procedure for their practice or polish their skills for existing procedures they are already performing.

Local and state medical society meetings also offer quality CME courses and such meetings can satisfy the "live" requirements that our certification boards call for. One potential drawback for live meetings is the fact that the time frames are rigid and careful planning must occur. I believe spring break for most school children is right around the corner? Why not take the kids on a short trip?

While there is no standard recommendation for staying current in clinical practice, this varied approach is what works the best for me. We as physicians must keep ourselves up to date on an ongoing basis, and fortunately we have several different choices available that can meet our constantly changing needs.

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Disclosures:

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